Colorado Springs police officer Gerald Brown patrols the Aries property. Although local taxes haven't gone to pay for maintaining the property, taxpayers nationwide got stuck with the tab when it reverted to the RTC.

Taxpayers stuck paying tab for Aries property

$1.1 million cost part of S&L bailout

By **Rich Laden**
Gazette Telegraph

When the massive east-side Aries property was annexed by Colorado Springs five years ago, city officials issued a guarantee to the taxpaying public that had a sort of "read my lips" assurance to it:

"No cost to city taxpayers."

That is, the cost of police and fire protection, snow plowing and other basic services for the roughly 24,000 acres would be paid by landowners there. Existing city residents would not have to pick up the tab.

And that's generally been the case.

But the nation's taxpayers have had to pay — to the tune of about $1.1 million since 1988. And city taxpayers who were promised they wouldn't have to pay a cent have had to pay as well — they've just had a lot of company.

Here's what happened:

To be sure, the agreement to annex the Aries property — stretching 14 miles along Colorado Springs' eastern border — called for existing city taxpayers to be protected from paying maintenance costs.

But that deal came a year before financial problems forced developer Frank Aries to turn over his property to a Phoenix savings and loan from which he had borrowed $235 million to buy it.

Because that savings and loan had failed a few months earlier and was operating under control of the Resolution Trust Corp., a federal agency created to oversee the nation's S&L

> "We're all paying for it, aren't we?"
>
> **City Controller Steve Hilfers**

tax burden, despite the best efforts of city officials.

"We're all paying for it, aren't we?" City Controller Steve Hilfers said.

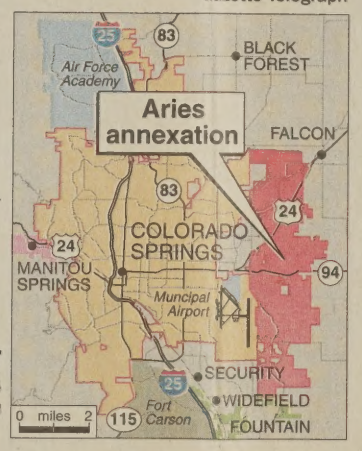
Of course, the $1.1 million maintenance cost of the Aries property during the past five years has been a drop in the bucket compared with the roughly $500 billion taxpayers spent to bail out the nation's S&Ls. If the Aries maintenance cost were assessed across the country, every man, woman and child, in effect, has paid about a quarter.

Yet, it's still a cost the RTC must pay. Part of its job is to sell off properties that came under its control as it took over failed S&Ls. Saudi investors recently agreed to buy most of the Aries property.

"The whole notion of agreeing to the annexation was that the citizens of Colorado Springs would not be on the hook for any expenses," said Dave Nickerson, the city's planning, development and finance director. "To date, they have not been. Unfortunately, the land owner turned out to be — at least for the past few years — the federally funded RTC."

By itself, the $1.1 million cost to maintain the Aries land might seem like a lot, especially since it's mostly undeveloped. Yet, the annexation agreement

Gazette Telegraph



It's a lonely job patrolling plains

The officer snakes his cruiser along the rolling plains, looking for bad guys.

Instead there are just a lot of rolling plains — maybe an occasional rabbit.

If the officer is really lucky, a speeder will bust the radar at 80 mph as a car whips through the vast emptiness.

Such is the beat on the former Aries property on the far eastern edge of Colorado Springs, the vast 24,411 acres annexed by the city in 1989 that went into default before the dreams for it were realized.

No one lives here. Across all this space are only five commercial buildings.

And only two have people working in them.

"You just drive," said one officer.

UPDATE

GT 2/21/93

Minorities split on supporting gay rights fight

Suspicions undermine unity

By **Angela Dire**
Gazette Telegraph

Last fall, James Smith went boldly into the voting booth and took his stand against Amendment 2.

He understood it would prohibit laws allowing gays and lesbians "to claim any minority or protected status, quota preferences or discrimination." And he had lived as a black man in this world long enough to understand the meaning of the last word.

"No human being should be discriminated against for any reason," says the 76-year-old president of Colorado Springs' Black Coalition of Concerned Citizens.

With that simple premise, gays and lesbians have looked to ethnic minority groups as natural allies not only in their fight to overturn Amendment 2, which Colorado voters solidly favored in the Nov. 2 election, but also in their broader struggle for civil rights.

Smith: "No human being should be discriminated against."

Local black and Hispanic leaders are working with gay activists to improve relations and cooperate politically. And nationally, minority leaders from the Rev. Jesse Jackson to Coretta Scott King have come out in favor of civil rights protection for gays and lesbians.

But for many minorities, the issue of gay rights is hardly a simple one. The battle over Amendment 2 has exposed deep divisions among blacks and Latinos.

Not unlike middle class whites, many average minority citizens fear the gay rights movement will push them farther behind in their own economic and political struggles. Some accuse gays of not supporting minority issues. Others are suspicious of the gay rights movement because they see it as controlled by affluent white men. And because of deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, still others have fundamental problems with homosexuality itself.

If anything, Amendment 2 has proved that the state's half-million blacks and Latinos are far from united behind the gay rights movement.

Listen more carefully to James Smith talk about that movement. Even though he condemns discrimination against gays, he says, "I believe they have an agenda we don't presently know. And believe you me, if they get full protection we will see men marrying each other, carrying on in public, kissing each other. It will be something we'll have to live with no matter how distasteful it may seem. What they do in their bedroom is their business. But for some reason, they don't think that's enough."

Now listen to Lynda Dickson, a 40-year-old black sociologist at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. To her, telling a gay person to act straight in public is no different than telling a black person to act white in public. She sees many parallels between the black civil rights

See **GAY RIGHTS**/B2

STATE

Avalanches wreaking havoc

Aspen's water cut off; Monarch skiers stuck

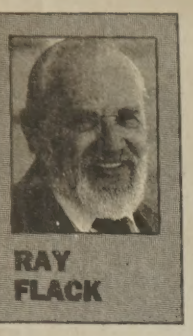
Associated Press

Avalanches cut off the water supply to Aspen, stranded nearly 1,000 skiers at Monarch Ski Resort and

Aspen Mountain dammed Castle and Maroon creeks. Homes below the creeks were evacuated because of the danger of flash flooding as water built up behind the slides, said Anne Stephens, spokeswoman for the Pitkin County Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff Bob Braudis said he did not know if there were any victims in the

Denver lawmaker denie



RAY FLACK

Rep. Gloria Tanner, a Denver Democrat, has introduced a bill that appears to be a direct attack on Douglas Bruce, who has been accused of neglecting some residential property he owns in Denver.

She swears she didn't have Bruce in mind when she wrote the legislation, which got a brief hearing in the House Local Government Committee and still clings to life.

The bill's aim is to give officials in three large cities an easy way to locate the owners of vacant, eyesore residential properties so that they can be prodded into rehabilitating them, she said.

In her Denver Park Hill neighborhood, there are lots of rundown properties that frequently are turned into crack houses or other illegal uses, she said.

Her bill would require an o property to register it if the u disconnected for 90 days.

The registration fee would registration isn't done, the ow fine of $500 per day until he c

The law would cover only c than 200,000 population, rest rado Springs, Denver and Aur

Bruce, who makes his living homes and apartments in Colo ver and Pueblo, has been accu Denver ordinance by neglectin properties.

TOP SECRET: Sen. Mike Bird Springs Republican and chairm Budget Committee, is puzzled c umn in a Denver newspaper th committee of clamping a lid of of proposed cuts in state gover

Gay rights/Minorities fear economic competition

From B1

movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the gay rights movement of the 1990s. "Homophobia seems to be the last accepted form of bigotry," she says.

Listen to Ignacio Rodriguez, the former chairman of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission who helped campaign for Amendment 2. He says gays, unlike minorities, are economically well-heeled and advantaged. "I haven't seen any evidence from the gay community indicating that they're discriminated against by any significant degree," he says.

And now listen to Ruben Martinez, Chicano activist and chairman of UCCS's Sociology Department. He calls assertions that gays are more affluent than the rest of the population ridiculous, based on inconclusive surveys and emotion rather than scientific research. "For a minority to fail to realize the patterns of discrimination that exist against gays and to justify them," he says, "makes one hard pressed to defend one's own protected status."

He is not surprised at how many minorities, at least in Colorado Springs, appear to oppose the gay rights movement. In the two parts of the city where ethnic minorities comprise the majority of the population, the measure carried by more than 60 percent. In a lower middle-class area of Pikes Peak Park with the highest minority population — 60 percent — Amendment 2 passed by 66 percent.

"Liberal views and open-mindedness come with education," says Martinez. "And many minorities, by exclusion, don't have education."

Particularly in Colorado Springs, he says, many minorities have more traditional, conservative backgrounds.

Regardless of their backgrounds, many minorities fear the economic consequences of one more group being included under civil rights laws. They see gays as a competitive threat.

Economic issues fuel gay-minority tensions

Inside Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in predominantly Chicano North Denver, many of those deep and complex feelings flooded to the surface one night last week. A statewide organization, Hispanics of Colorado, conducted a panel discussion to help bridge the gap between gays and Chicanos.

It began with the story of a Denver police officer who is a lesbian. Angela Romero, one of the plaintiffs in the constitutional challenge of Amendment 2, told her fellow Chicanos how she had been baptized at Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1950 and how since then she had had to live in two worlds. For many years she concealed her homosexuality from friends and family. She almost married — in part to protect her career with the police department.

When people within the department threatened to sabotage her career by exposing her homosexuality, she wanted to turn to the Chicano community for help. But in 1988, she said, not many Latinos were open to talking about homosexuality.

"I think it's real important for Latinos to realize we are flesh of your flesh and blood of your blood," she told the group. "We are your people."

Yet the issue cuts much deeper than even Romero's emotional appeal.

Jorge Amaya, a Chicano activist in northern Colorado, told the group how a statewide boycott sparked by Amendment 2 has raised fear among blue-collar Hispanics and poor migrant workers. Companies such as Monfort, which employs many Hispanics, are being targeted by gay rights activists outside the state. And if the boycott is extended to farm products — Western Slope peaches, San Luis Valley potatoes — it could hurt even more.

Bob Jackson/Gazette Telegraph

Lynda Dickson, sociology professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, sees many parallels between the black civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the gay rights movement of the 1990s. "Homophobia seems to be the last accepted form of bigotry," she says.

But the growing tension of Hispanics toward gays goes beyond the boycott to issues of equal employment, affirmative action. "We've had to compete against the white woman, the disabled, the Vietnam veteran," said Amaya. "And the word is now we have to compete against the gay — which I don't believe is true — but the word is getting out. I'm starting to see a lot of resentment between the Chicano community and the gay community."

Lynn Palma, one of the attorneys challenging the constitutionality of Amendment 2, tells the group gays want equality and not "special rights" — the successful slogan of Colorado for Family Values, the group that drafted Amendment 2.

Gay rights movement seen as white man's movement

But in the heart of this Hispanic Catholic parish, some of the urgency is lost. Some folks are angry not at the Christian fundamentalists of the far right but at reports that gay activists at the far left defaced the downtown Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver.

An older Hispanic woman complained her neighborhood association has been taken over by gay, white men who seem bent on closing down some of the small Chicano businesses.

"You have to have sensitivity to our culture," says 53-year-old Ann Alire. "I don't think it's a gay movement. I think it's a white man's gay movement. The white gay man has taken over and doesn't really give a damn about people of color."

"But the issue is not that these people are gay," pleads 42-year-old Carmela Flores, a lesbian. "The issue is that these people are coming in and forcing us out of our own neighborhoods. What you're talking about is gentrification."

"No it isn't," Alire shoots back. "Mostly gay white men are trying to destroy what little cohesiveness we have in our community, and I resent that."

Later she insists she's not opposed to gay rights; her own son is gay. Yet she voted for Amendment 2. "It tore me apart to vote in favor of it, but I'd do it again. Because of the threats. And what they've done to the cathedral."

Yet despite all those feelings, Alire and others who attended the meeting held out a chance that gays and Chicanos could settle their differences.

"The question is, how do we come together?" asked community activist Nita Gonzales.

Some see the compromise in efforts such as Come Together Colorado, the Colorado Springs group that is proposing a measure to override Amendent 2. It would protect gays from discrimination in housing and employment while barring them from traditional remedies to discrimination such as affirmative action.

Colorado Springs minority leaders, from church pastors to the head of the local NAACP, support the effort. "Our position is real simple," says NAACP president James Tucker. "Everyone should be protected equally under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution."

But others, such as Ruben Martinez, are critical of the compromise. "The real thing here is people want to end the boycott," he says. "That's political expediency. It isn't looking out for the rights of individuals." Martinez says he won't be satisfied until discrimination against gays and lesbians is given a fair hearing before a body such as the U.S. Congress.

Either way, the issue won't end with Amendment 2.

"It's going to come back and come back," says sociology professor Lynda Dickson. And for her, it is a curious feeling to view the conflict from the inside.

"It's so fascinating to suddenly be on the inside of the issue, to be a heterosexual and to hear other heterosexuals express their feelings about homosexuals."

When she hears those feelings, she knows just how far the gay rights movement has to go. "Even people who really seem to embrace the idea of diversity of color or sex are still not at a place where they can accept it with sexual orientation."